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Group Art Unit 3671

Amendments

In the Claims

Please amend the claims as follows, without prejudice:

1. (currently amended) A hydraulic drive device capable of driving in a forward and a reverse direction, comprising:

a casing;

a hydraulic pump located within the casing;

a control arm coupled to the hydraulic pump to control the hydraulic pump fluid flow, the control arm having a first position corresponding to the hydraulic drive device driving in a forward direction and a second position;

a first switch mounted at a first location on the hydraulic drive device, the first switch cooperating with the control arm and having an open state and a closed state, wherein ~~the state of~~ the first switch being in the open state is indicative of the control arm assuming ~~[[a]]~~ the first position; and

a second switch mounted at a second location on the hydraulic drive device separate from the first location, the second switch cooperating with the control arm and having an open state and a closed state, wherein the state of the second switch is indicative of the control arm assuming ~~[[a]]~~ the second position.

2-3. (cancelled)

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4. (original) The hydraulic drive device of claim 1, wherein the second position of the control arm corresponds to the hydraulic drive device driving in the reverse direction.

5. (original) The hydraulic drive device of claim 4, wherein the second switch being in the open state is indicative of the control arm being in the second position.

6.-9. (cancelled)

10. (previously presented) A hydraulic drive device capable of driving in a forward and a reverse direction, comprising:

a casing;

a hydraulic pump located within the casing;

a control arm coupled to the hydraulic pump to control the hydraulic pump fluid flow;

a first switch cooperating with the control arm, wherein the state of the first switch is indicative of the control arm assuming a first position;

a second switch cooperating with the control arm, wherein the state of the second switch is indicative of the control arm assuming a second position; and

a return-to-neutral mechanism coupled to the control arm, the return-to-neutral mechanism also including a stationary arm.

11. (original) The hydraulic drive device of claim 10, wherein the first switch is attached to the stationary arm.

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12. (previously presented) The hydraulic drive device of claim 11, wherein the second switch is attached to the stationary arm.

13-14. (cancelled)

15. (original) The hydraulic drive device of claim 10, wherein the position of the stationary arm establishes the neutral position of the hydraulic drive device.

16. (original) The hydraulic drive device of claim 1, wherein the first switch is mechanically actuated.

17. (original) The hydraulic drive device of claim 1, wherein the second switch is mechanically actuated.

18-19. (cancelled)

20-21. (cancelled)

22. (currently amended) The hydraulic drive device of ~~claim 21~~, claim 47 wherein the control arm being in a neutral position places the first switch and the second switch in the closed state and enables the ignition.

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23. (currently amended) The hydraulic drive device of ~~claim 21~~, claim 47 wherein the control arm being in the first position places the first switch in the open state and disables the ignition.

24. (currently amended) The hydraulic drive device of ~~claim 21~~, claim 47 wherein the control arm being in the second position places the second switch in the open state and disables the ignition.

25. (withdrawn) The hydraulic drive device of claim 20, wherein the hydraulic drive device further includes a mower blade.

26. (withdrawn) The hydraulic drive device of claim 25, wherein the mower blade is electrically coupled to the second switch.

27. (withdrawn) The hydraulic drive device of claim 26, wherein the control arm being in the second position places the second switch in the open state and disables the mower blade.

28. (previously presented) A hydraulic drive device capable of driving in a forward and a reverse direction, comprising:

a casing;

a hydraulic pump located within the casing;

a control arm coupled to the hydraulic pump to control the hydraulic pump fluid flow;

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a first switch cooperating with the control arm and having an open state and a closed state, wherein the state of the first switch is indicative of the control arm assuming a first position; and

a second switch cooperating with the control arm and having an open state and a closed state, wherein the state of the second switch is indicative of the control arm assuming a second position,

wherein the positions of the first switch and the second switch with respect to the control arm are jointly adjustable.

29. (withdrawn) The hydraulic drive device of claim 1, wherein the positions of the first switch and the second switch with respect to the control arm are independently adjustable.

30. (currently amended) A hydraulic drive device capable of driving in a forward and a reverse direction comprising:

a variable displacement hydraulic pump;

a control arm coupled to the hydraulic pump for controlling pump displacement;

a first switch cooperating with the control arm, the first switch providing a first signal when the control arm assumes a first position; and

a second switch cooperating with the control arm, the second switch providing a second signal when the control arm assumes a second position, wherein the first switch and second switch are mounted in separate locations on the hydraulic drive device;

a prime mover drivingly coupled to the hydraulic pump; and

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an ignition electrically coupled to the prime mover, the first switch and the second switch.

31. (original) The hydraulic drive device of claim 30, wherein the first position corresponds to the hydraulic drive device driving in a forward direction.

32. (original) The hydraulic drive device of claim 30, wherein the second position corresponds to the hydraulic drive device driving in a reverse direction.

33-34. (cancelled)

35. (currently amended) The hydraulic drive device of ~~claim 34~~ claim 30, wherein the control arm being in the neutral position places the first switch and second switch in a closed state and enables the ignition switch to actuate the prime mover.

36. (withdrawn) The hydraulic drive device of claim 32, wherein a mower blade is coupled to the hydraulic drive device.

37. (withdrawn) The hydraulic drive device of claim 36, wherein the control arm being in the second position causes the second switch to provide the second signal to the mower blade, thereby causing the mower blade to be disabled.

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38. (cancelled)

39. (withdrawn) The hydraulic drive device of claim 30, wherein the positions of the first switch and the second switch with respect to the control arm are independently adjustable.

40. (original) A hydraulic drive device attached to a vehicle having a prime mover, which is drivingly coupled to the hydraulic drive device, the hydraulic drive device comprising:

a housing;

a hydraulic pump positioned within the housing;

a control arm coupled to the hydraulic pump for controlling the hydraulic pump output;

an ignition switch electrically coupled to the prime mover; and

a pair of neutral switches cooperating with the control arm and electrically connected to the ignition switch, each of the neutral switches having an open position where the ignition switch is disabled and a closed position where the ignition switch is enabled, wherein both of the neutral switches will assume the closed position when the control arm is in a predefined position.

41. (original) The hydraulic drive device of claim 40, wherein the predefined position is a neutral position.

42. (original) A hydrostatic transaxle drivingly coupled to a prime mover, where the prime mover is electronically coupled to an ignition switch, the hydrostatic transaxle including a casing, a hydraulic pump mounted within the casing and in fluid communication with a hydraulic

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motor, a moveable swash plate cooperable with the hydraulic pump for controlling the speed and direction of rotation of the hydraulic motor, and a control arm coupled to the moveable swash plate for adjusting the orientation of the swash plate, wherein the improvement comprises:

a return-to-neutral mechanism drivingly coupled to the control arm for returning the control arm to a neutral position, the return-to-neutral mechanism further comprising a stationary arm, an inner scissor return arm, an outer second scissor return arm, and a biasing device for rotating the control arm to a neutral position; and

a pair of neutral switches cooperating with the control arm and electrically connected to the ignition switch, each of the neutral switches having an open position where the ignition switch is disabled and a closed position where the neutral switch is enabled, wherein both of the neutral switches assume the closed position when the control arm is in a predefined position.

43. (original) The hydraulic drive device of claim 42, wherein the predefined position is a neutral position.

44. (withdrawn) A hydraulic drive device drivingly coupled to a mower blade comprising:
a variable displacement hydraulic pump;
a control arm coupled to the hydraulic pump for controlling pump displacement; and
a switch cooperating with the control arm, the switch providing a signal when the control arm assumes a predefined position, wherein the control arm being in the predefined position places the switch in an open state and disables the mower blade.

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45. (withdrawn) The hydraulic drive device of claim 44, wherein the predefined position is a forward position.

46. (withdrawn) The hydraulic drive device of claim 44, wherein the predefined position is a reverse position.

47. (new) A hydraulic drive device capable of driving in a forward and a reverse direction, comprising:

a casing;

a hydraulic pump located within the casing;

a control arm coupled to the hydraulic pump to control the hydraulic pump fluid flow, the control arm having a first position corresponding to the hydraulic drive device driving in a forward direction and a second position;

a first switch mounted at a first location on the hydraulic drive device, the first switch cooperating with the control arm and having an open state and a closed state, wherein the first switch being in the open state is indicative of the control arm assuming the first position;

a second switch mounted at a second location on the hydraulic drive device separate from the first location, the second switch cooperating with the control arm and having an open state and a closed state, wherein the state of the second switch is indicative of the control arm assuming the second position;

a prime mover drivingly connected to the hydraulic pump; and

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an ignition electrically coupled to the prime mover and the first switch and the second switch.

48. (new) A hydraulic drive device capable of driving in a forward and a reverse direction comprising:

a variable displacement hydraulic pump;

a control arm coupled to the hydraulic pump for controlling pump displacement;

a first switch cooperating with the control arm, the first switch providing a first signal when the control arm assumes a first position; and

a second switch cooperating with the control arm, the second switch providing a second signal when the control arm assumes a second position, wherein the first switch and second switch are mounted in separate locations on the hydraulic drive device and the positions of the first switch and the second switch with respect to the control arm are jointly adjustable.